

I CLAIM AS MY INVENTION:

1. A method for producing an image, comprising the steps of:

in a computer, segmenting a curved surface of a three-dimensional image of a

subject, and storing the three-dimensional image in a memory

accessible by the computer as a volume dataset;

transforming the volume dataset to transform the segmented curved surface

into a plane; and

representing the transformed curved surface of the three-dimensional image

with a slice of a predetermined thickness at at least one location

selected from the group consisting of inside of the three-dimensional

image and outside of the three-dimensional image.

2. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said three-dimensional image

comprises a plurality of consecutive computed tomography slice images, with image

data for each slice image being described with Cartesian coordinates, and wherein

the step of segmenting the curved surface of the three-dimensional image

comprises:

performing a coordinate transformation for each slice image to polar

coordinates relative to a line extending through the three-dimensional

image that is oriented substantially perpendicularly to the slice images;

determining contours that are image in each transformed slice image and

allocated to the surface of the three-dimensional image;

transforming the pixels of the contours back into the coordinate system of the

volume dataset; and

re-extracting pixels along said contours for representing the surface of the three-dimensional image, after transformation of the image into the plane, with said slice of predetermined thickness.

3. A method as claimed in claim 1 comprising employing an image of at least a part of a living subject as said three-dimensional image, and wherein said surface is a body surface of the living being.

4. A method as claimed in claim 1 comprising selecting said subject from the group consisting of a bone of a living being and an organ of a living being.

5. A method as claimed in claim 1 comprising orienting said plane along a line of sight toward said three-dimensional image.

6. A method as claimed in claim 1 comprising orienting said plane along a line of sight away from said three-dimensional image.

7. A method as claimed in claim 1 comprising representing image data allocated to said slice of predetermined thickness by a technique selected from the group consisting of multplanar reformation, maximal intensity projection, minimal intensity projection, and volume rendering.

8. A method as claimed in claim 1 comprising the additional step of subjecting said image data to filtering for an image enhancement selected from the group consisting of smoothing, edge-accentuation and structure-accentuation.